

Defense Acquisition Deskbook— An Acquisition Reform Unqualified Success

Institutionalizing an Automated Acquisition Process

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If you have not already been exposed to the Defense Acquisition Deskbook, let me use this article as a forum to both introduce and update you on its purpose and capabilities. This article also serves as a follow-on article and update to the July-August 1995 *Program Manager* article, "AAI PAT Introduces the Acquisition Deskbook."

The Beginning

What is the Deskbook? It is an automated reference tool providing the full complement of acquisition information "at the fingertips" of the acquisition professional. Imagine having the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and the Defense FAR Supplement (DFARS) online. Now broaden this picture to include the Service supplements, the DoD Directive 5000.1, and the DoD 5000.2-R. Add a body of information describing the flow of the acquisition process; the "hows" and "whys" of the Operational Requirements Document (ORD), Acquisition Program Baseline (APB), Test and Evaluation Master Plan (TEMP), and Milestone Decision Reviews; sample formats excerpted from the preceding information that you can cut and paste into your own acquisition package; and software tools to help you generate the required information. Complete the image with all this information interconnected via hypertext links so you can navigate quickly and efficiently from one document or body of information to another.

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other. Is this the Defense Acquisition Deskbook? Yes—the Deskbook is this and a whole lot more!

Changing a Culture

Government acquisition professionals have operated within a system often described as encouraging and rewarding those who follow the rules and regulations rather than exercising judgment and common sense; using standard practices, rather than flexible, agile, and innovative approaches; avoiding risk, rather than managing risk; and developing functional experts who interpret the rules, rather than cross-functional teams oriented toward

building successful programs. In today's world of fast-paced technology, this traditional system of complex laws, regulations, rules, and procedures does not provide the flexibility required by the acquisition professional to meet the needs of the warfighters in a quick, efficient, and cost effective manner. Recognizing this, in 1993 the Clinton administration created the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition Reform) (ODUSD[AR]) to be the catalyst for streamlining the acquisition process. Headed by Mrs. Colleen A. Preston, the office's goal is to make the Department of Defense the world's

smartest, most efficient, most responsive buyer of best value goods and services that meet the warfighters needs while relying on a globally competitive national industrial base.

Legislative Reforms

A prime example of streamlining the acquisition process is the March 15, 1996 release of the 5000 Series documents, DoDD 5000.1 and DoD



5000.2-R. In March of 1995, Dr. Paul G. Kaminski, Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology) (USD[A&T]) established an Integrated Product Team (IPT) for the purpose of rewriting the 1991 documents. This cross-functional team, composed of representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Services, and Agencies, applied a new philosophy to the rewrite effort—to separate mandatory direction from discretionary guidance. Mandatory direction was defined by the IPT as acquisition statute, policy, or information essential for the Milestone Decision Authority to make good decisions, and

that which made logical business sense.

Taking the 1200-page existing set of 5000 Series and the 46-page 8120 Series documents, the IPT separated the mandatory from the discretionary material. The result—a 16-page directive guiding all defense acquisitions, and a 122-page user-friendly regulation implementing the philosophy for Major Defense Acquisition Programs and Major Automated Information System Acquisition Programs.

For the first time in the history of acquisition regulations, the “must do” practices of the acquisition process are clearly stated; and the alternative “may do” practices are provided as guidance, acknowledging the ability of the acquisition professional to exercise judgment and manage risk.

Timeliness— Getting the Word Out

Now that we have new philosophy from OSD in the form of the 5000 Series—delineating the acquisition process mandatory (must do) from the discretionary (may do)—what other areas are open for improvement? Well, there has always been a cry for more timely information. A gap of as much as six months can occur between the time a statute or policy change is issued before it is received in the field. And when received, the information is often restated or supplemented to the point that the message may no longer be that intended by its authors. Additionally, there has always been a need to better link the procurement and program management communities. An understanding by these communities of each other’s guiding policies—the FAR and the 5000—can only facilitate a closer working relationship and common appreciation.

About the Website

Addressing all these needs is the Defense Acquisition Deskbook. The Deskbook is comprised of two separate pieces. The first piece, released on July 31, 1996, is available on Compact Disk (CD), or via download from the

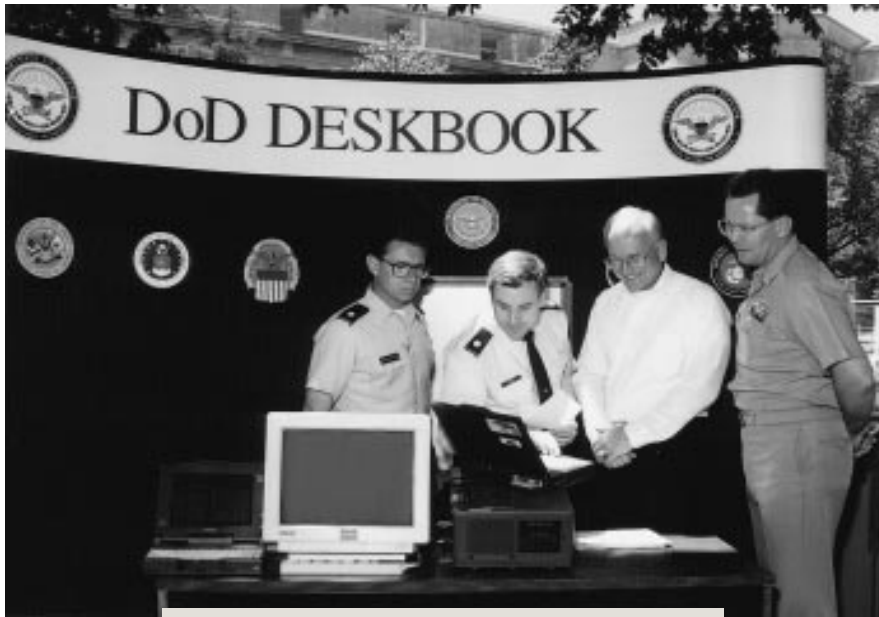
Deskbook Website. Access to the second piece is through the Deskbook World Wide Web site on the Internet:

<http://deskbook.osd.mil/deskbook.html>

The Deskbook CD-ROM provides access to a current and complete body of acquisition information, and is presented in two parts: the reference library and the information structure. The reference library contains the FAR, DFARS, the DoDD 5000.1 and 5000.2-R, every statute and document reference in the two 5000 documents, and numerous Service and Agency documents. Building on the mandatory-discretionary philosophy, the library divides mandatory documents, like the FAR and the 5000, from discretionary guidance contained in handbooks, manuals, and guidebooks. The reference library satisfies the need for timely and unfiltered access to policy and statute, as well as informing you how OSD, Component, and Command levels are implementing policy and statute.

The information structure contains discretionary guidance. Access is provided through two avenues, process or topic, depending on how your mind may focus your search for information. For example, to access information concerning how to write a TEMP, you may go to the TOPIC: 2.8.1 Test and Evaluation Process, or to the PROCESS: 1.2.2.7 Plan and Document Test and Evaluation Strategy. Both paths lead you to a screen with a Description; associated Mandatory References in the FAR, DFARS, 5000 Series; and at the Component- and Command-level. By listing the FAR, DFARS, and 5000 references by subject, side by side, and providing hypertext links to the reference material, acquisition professionals can see the integration of procurement and program management community direction, and are provided fingertip access to that information.

Scrolling down the screen, continuing to use the TEMP example, you find Discretionary Practices divided by



DR. PAUL G. KAMINSKI, UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (ACQUISITION & TECHNOLOGY) REVIEWS A PROTOTYPE OF THE ACQUISITION DESKBOOK WHICH WAS ON DISPLAY IN THE PENTAGON COURTYARD AS PART OF ACQUISITION REFORM ACCELERATION DAY ACTIVITIES, MAY 31, 1996. PICTURED FROM LEFT: ARMY LT. COL. MICHAEL B. MONAGHAN, OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACQUISITION; MAJ. RANDY HILDEBRANDT, AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND; KAMINSKI; AND NAVY CMDR. ERIC C. SMITH, COMMANDER, CEC, NAVAL FACILITIES ENGINEERING COMMAND.

OSD, Component- and Command-level. Hypertext links connect you to information on how a TEMP is developed, who requires the information, and why it is required. A TEMP format is provided under the Sample Formats and Tools section, followed by a list of software tools to help you gain efficiencies in the process. The Software Tool information includes the name of the tool, a narrative on what the tool can do for you, and distributor information such as phone number, mailing, and E-mail address. Each screen also provides access to Innovative Practices, Practical Advice, and Lessons Learned from acquisition professionals sharing the benefit of their experience on a particular subject.

Rounding out the acquisition professional's information needs is the Defense Acquisition Deskbook

Website. The Website consists of four parts:

- First, there is a bulletin board capability allowing you to see new policies and practices included in the next quarterly release of the Deskbook CD-ROM, to provide comments and feedback to other users comments, and to respond to questions asked by the acquisition leadership through a survey function.
- Addressing the need for timely information flow, the second part of the Website is the "Ask a Professor" program. This program enables you to ask questions about acquisition policies and practices, which are then routed to knowledgeable faculty members at appropriate DoD schools for answers. The questions

are posted on the bulletin board, and within 10 working days, answers are provided and posted with the question.

- Third, the Website has links to other sites of interest, like the Acquisition Reform Home Page, to training opportunities and upcoming events, and to newsletters.
- The fourth part of the Website is technical support information provided by the Deskbook Joint Program Office located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

Unending Expansion and Update

Information contained on the CD-ROM and accessible through the Website will never be considered complete. Acquisition community input will grow; and topics, processes, and references will be updated and expanded as the acquisition reform revolution continues, as will the technology employed to provide you the Defense Acquisition Deskbook. Within the next year, technological advances will enable the user to access both the hypertext linked body of CD-ROM information and the Website over the Internet. Additionally, the Deskbook Joint Program Office is developing a Macintosh version to allow a broader set of users access to this acquisition tool.

In Conclusion

The Defense Acquisition Deskbook is a visible icon of the cultural change revolutionizing the DoD acquisition community. It provides a much needed tool for the acquisition professional, but more importantly, Deskbook benchmarks the philosophical change undertaken in reforming the way DoD does business. An empowered DoD acquisition workforce provided with clear direction, flexibility to use judgment, timely information, and integrated automated tools will be able to respond to the challenges of today's world, and enable a world-class acquisition system supporting the warfighter's needs!